

Eliot, Francis Perceval

A series of letters on the
political and financial state
of the nation, at the com-
mencement of the year 1814

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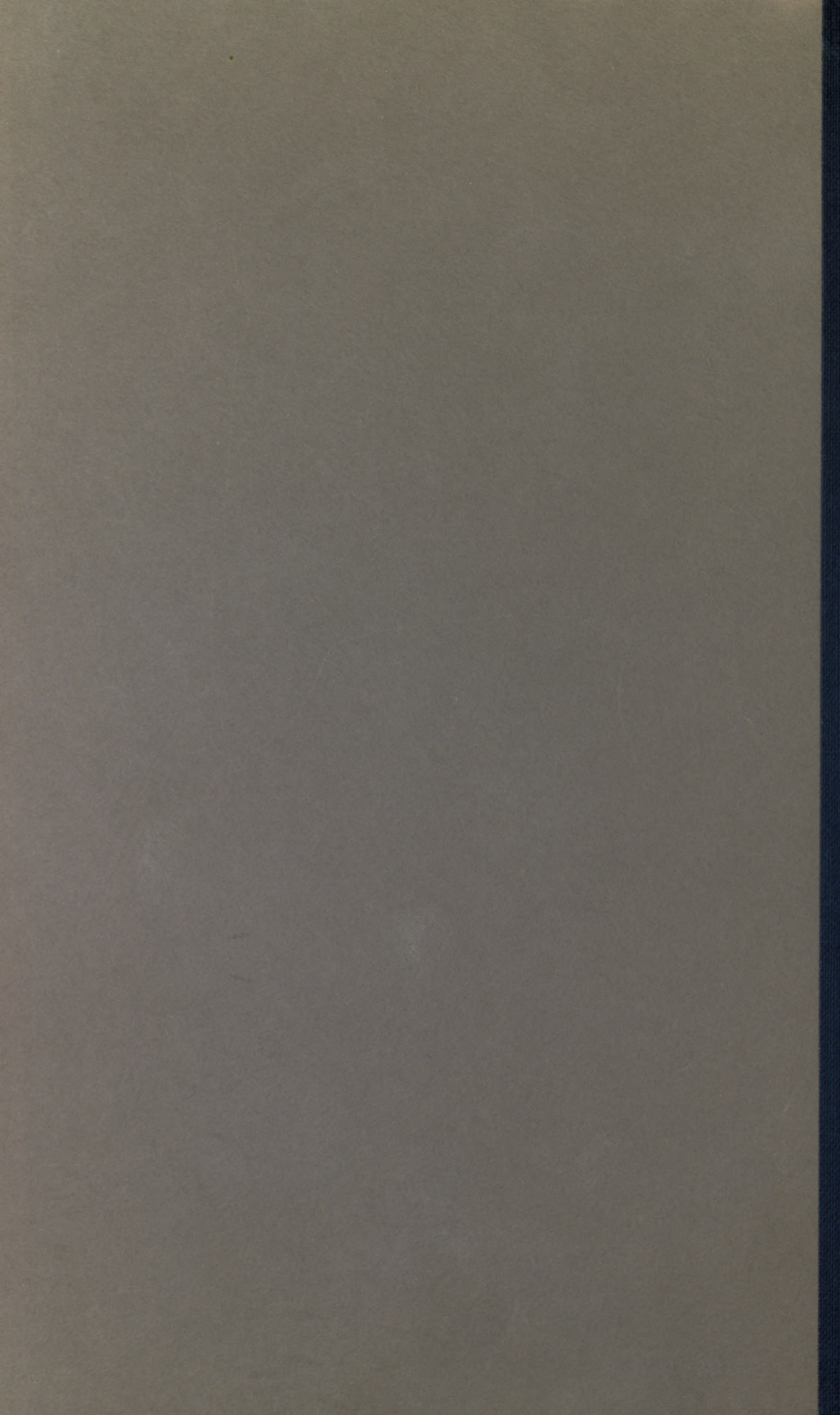


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Political and Financial

BY THE AUTHOR,

EDITORIAL OF THE YEAR

1811

ADDRESSED TO

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

BY FALKLAND.

1811

(E. Wob. H. P.)
A

SERIES OF LETTERS

ON THE

Political and Financial

STATE OF THE NATION,

AT THE

COMMENCEMENT OF THE YEAR

1814;

ADDRESSED TO

THE EARL OF LIVERPOOL.

BY FALKLAND.

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A

SERIES OF LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

MY LORD,

AT a moment when the unprecedented prosperity of the British empire sufficiently attests the general correctness of your principles and the practical wisdom of your councils, I trust with entire confidence to your accustomed candor, for allowing a near observer and sincere friend of your administration to trespass on your attention with such occasional remarks on the political relations and financial resources of the kingdom, and on the past effect or probable future bearing of your measures, as may be dictated in an equal degree by the impartial spirit of unbiassed patriotism, as they will certainly proceed from the most cordial interest in the success of your Lordship's ministry. And if, in the communication of my ideas, I should sometimes venture to suggest a shade of difference in opinion, either on the bearing or on the effect of the future or of the past, I shall repose myself with the same complete reliance on your Lordship's liberal discrimination, for setting the greater value on the sincerity of the general concurrence, on account of the manly expression of an occasional dissent.

During the whole of the long protracted and awful struggle in which we have been engaged, not for conquest, but for security,

not for empire, but for existence, the writer of this letter has never presumed so far to distrust the unerring wisdom and ever wakeful justice of Providence, as to entertain even a momentary doubt with respect to the ultimate success of the contest which now promises, in all human probability, a speedy and a glorious termination.

To you, my Lord, and to the partners of your council, it must afford no trifling cause of honest pride in the conscious triumph of your principles, and the well-deserved success of your plans.

But whilst I join most fully in the tribute of a people's thanks to you and to your colleagues, for your firm and strenuous perseverance in the vital conflict, for your wise and energetic application of the kingdom's strength where it was most likely to be productive of national benefit; a conduct which has at last extorted the approbation even of your parliamentary adversaries; satisfied with having so carried yourselves as to deserve and obtain the general applause of your fellow subjects; you will not, I am sure, deny your assent to the justice of my tracing the first origin of systematic and effectual resistance to the all-grasping ambition of our enemy, to the firm, the luminous, the comprehensive mind, of that illustrious statesman, in whose distinguished friendship and sagacious lead the early days of your political life were so honorably and usefully employed. And if, amongst the joyous, the rapturous sensations of the present hour, there is a momentary feeling of more gloomy cast, to damp the general joy and rapture, it is that he to whom we owe so much of the felicity which now awaits us, has not been spared to be a participator in the public enjoyment, to witness the completion of his dearest hopes, the wide-spread triumph of his upright principles.

But may we not, my Lord, presume to think, that amongst the bright rewards of his past virtues, it may, perhaps, be not the least, to recollect, if pure and unembodied spirits are suffered to retain the memory of their former lives, that short as was the duration of his mortal existence, it was yet long enough to enable him to lay the firm and stable foundations of permanent security for his beloved country; the leading object of his patriotic life; the last sad aspiration of his parting breath? That this is as strongly impressed on your mind, as it is on that of the person who addresses you, I have no hesitation in believing; and that the pen

of history may transmit his merits in their proper colors to our children's children, even to our latest generation, I will also venture to set down as our concurrent wish ; because, independently of the liberal construction of your Lordship's mind, it must naturally be so much your own interest, that every statesman who has served his country faithfully should have his services retained for ever in the grateful recollection of his countrymen.

How well the structure has been reared on the firm basis he had prepared for its erection ; and with what active application succeeding architects have proceeded towards its completion ; the annals of the period elapsed since his lamented loss, and the splendid temple raised to British fame, and consecrated by the high station which this country now holds amongst the powers of Europe, are sufficient evidences ; and you, my Lord, and your present colleagues, will not fail to receive your appropriate share of praise on this account, in the estimation of a discerning public.

Neither will the discriminating justice of that public omit to acknowledge, with due gratitude, the debt it owes you, for having with such admirable fortitude and clear-sighted judgment, refused to yield to the weak solicitations of those desponding statesmen, (if statesmen they can be called,) who, despairing of the cause of freedom, and regarding the Continent of Europe as completely and irrevocably subdued, and your own resistance to the storm as wholly ineffectual, pressed you to withdraw your gallant troops from the scene of all their glory ; and to recall, in the full career of victory and fame, that consummate chief, who at no period had been known to risk an action but on sure and well considered grounds ; and who had never yet been seen to lose a battle in which he had ventured to engage himself. That unrivalled general, of whose admirable qualifications for command we may so accurately say, *“ Ego, enim, sic existimo, in summo imperatore quatuor has res inesse oportere, scientiam rei militaris, virtutem, auctoritatem, felicitatem.”*

² And who, indeed, has ever surpassed him in military know-

¹ Cicero pro Lege Manilia.

² “ Quis, igitur, hoc homine scientior unquam aut fuit, aut esse debuit? Qui non modo eorum hominum qui nunc sunt gloriam, sed etiam antiquitatis memoriam virtute superavit.”—*Oratio eadem.*

ledge, either amongst his cotemporaries, or of those who have gone before him, even from the remotest ages of antiquity! who exceeds him in valor? who has ever better known how to preserve an authority so firm, so dignified, and yet so conciliatory, and so little oppressive to his inferiors? and where is the general to be found who has ever proved an equal partaker in the smiles of fortune?¹ He who has actually gained more victories than most other men have taken the trouble to read of,—who has conquered or redeemed more countries than other generals have even thought of in the way of conquest²—who, in every kind of warfare, and in almost every quarter of the globe, whether in India, Egypt, Denmark, Portugal,³ Spain, or France, has so wooed and wedded victory to his single arm, has so distinguished himself by his unwearyed application to the numberless and arduous duties of his high station, that it should seem as if no possible event within the scale of military contingency could escape his vigilant foresight and comprehensive caution.

Yet was this the commander, and the gallant and enterprising soldiers whom he had so often led to conquest were the troops, whom, in the highest state of discipline, and flushed with victory, these shallow politicians would have persuaded you to withdraw from the Peninsula, and by giving up that country, to have deserted the general cause, and left the whole Continent without a rallying point,—without a single corner in which any thing like an organised or effectual resistance to the common enemy could have been found to exist.

For who, my Lord, can be so blind to common causes and

¹ “Plura bella gessit, quam ceteri legerunt; plures provincias confecit, quam alii concupiverunt.”—Cic. *ut ant.*

² “Quod denique genus belli esse potest in quo illum non exercuerit fortuna reipublicæ? Civile, Africanum, Transalpinum, Hispaniense, mixtum ex civitatibus atque ex bellicosissimis nationibus, servile, navale bellum, varia et diversa genera, et bellorum et hostium, non solum gesta ab hoc uno, sed etiam confecta, nullam rem esse declarant, in usu militari positam, quæ hujus viri scientiam fugere possit.”—Cic. *ut ant.*

³ “Testis est Hispania, quæ sæpissime plurimos hostes ab hoc superatos prostratosque conspexit.”—Cic. *ut ant.*

effects, as not to see that from the powerful assistance given by England to our ancient allies in Portugal, the latent spark of liberty in Spain was blown into a flame; that the success of the brave Spaniards in asserting their independence encouraged and promoted the heroic resistance of Russia, and contributed to the defeat and disgraceful flight of the unprincipled invader of Moscow; called forth, and revived the ancient courage of the warlike Prussians; and gave a decided energy to the politics of the Court of Stockholm; and when would the Austrian monarch have ventured single-handed to take the field against the oppressive mandates of his imperious ally, but for the formidable support embodied in his favor in the North of Germany.

In Britain, then, my Lord, and from the energy and persevering fortitude of Pittite councils, may we fairly presume to assert that the present promising aspect of affairs in Europe, has arisen,

The conjuncture is most favorable,—may it be turned to the account it promises,—for never, in all reasonable calculation, will such another combination of auspicious circumstances again unite to bind so many nations in one common chain of interest together.

Seize it, my Lord; pursue it; push it by all fair and lawful means to its proper end; to the destruction of the Usurper, and the restoring of the lawful government, and you will perfect a consummation that is, indeed, devoutly to be prayed and wished for.

Short of this, my Lord, your labors are of no avail, and all the mass of blood and treasure hitherto expended in the contest will prove only useless waste, and idle extravagance. Whatever terms you bind the faithless Corsican to sign, however gratifying to this country, or to the Continental powers in your alliance, however liberal towards himself, his concurrence will be hollow, treacherous, and deceitful; he means to keep them only till he can elude you. He has no common feelings of humanity about him; he is so framed

“That no compunctious visitings of nature

“Shake his fell purpose.”

Of mortal genus, but in himself a species, he holds no real commerce with mankind. Like crook-back'd RICHARD, he is himself alone. Never was he yet known to forgive or to forget an offence; and the dark thought that rankles closest to his malignant heart is

utter and unrelenting hatred to Britain as the first origin of all his disappointments and disasters.

He may appear to concede, and own a temporary yielding to the blast that bends his power; but, unless the destructive axe shall be applied to his deepest roots, he will rise again, and, though slowly, once more like the deadly upas shed the contagion of his poisonous branches on all around him.

I have always considered this man as much over-rated by the world in point of talent; never attributing his dazzling successes to the inspirations of a powerful intellect, under the guidance of a clear unclouded judgment; but rather to the low persevering cunning of an iniquitous mind, barred by no dread of moral turpitude from pursuing every means to accomplish any profitable object; and favored by an unprecedented concurrence of fortuitous circumstances. And this is well known to have been my constant and undeviating language for years long past; as much in the meridian of his might and perfect plenitude of his overwhelming power, as now in the moment of his disgraceful downfall.

For what man of common discernment could avoid deciding on his lamentable deficiency in political judgment, to see him throw away the opportunity afforded of consolidating rank and affluence in a high though secondary station under the lawful monarch, before he exchanged the substantial influence of his authority as First Consul for the empty title of an Emperor? And again, when decked with this self-assumed gewgaw, risking its almost instant loss, by plunging into needless wars, when, tired of revolutionary storms, the people of France would gladly have confirmed, and the nations of Europe have acquiesced in, any form of government which gave them peace and quiet?

As a General, what more gross, more frequent than his blunders? His rash attack, and cowardly retreat in Egypt;—Marengo nearly lost, and but retrieved by the superior genius of an under-officer;—a distant war commenced at the extremity of Europe, at a season of the year when any degree in the scale of intellect above the freezing point of imbecility, would have anticipated the horrors of a winter campaign in Russia;—the silly pride of retaining Dresden, when every hope of its preservation to any useful purpose must have been lost in any sober judgment.

How different from that admirable discrimination in our own illustrious Wellington, which knows so well how to select the precise moment, for ensuring the rapid and victorious advance of a Cæsar, by the skilfully conducted and well-timed retrogression of a Fabius!

Yet, contemptibly as I think of Buonaparte's intellectual powers, both in war and politics, and holding his moral qualities in utter detestation as one void of faith, a rebel, and an assassin; the man is to be feared;—there is about him an energy of evil; a pertinacity, even to his own undoing, in the pursuit of crime, which renders him an object of perpetual dread. His power must be annihilated; his existence should be put an end to; and it were well that the spontaneous movement of the French themselves, should bring him to the death he merits; of their will, if enabled to declare it, I have no doubt; to assist them in so doing should be the leading object of the Allied Powers.

Can any one believe that the sight of their real princes will not operate like the electric fire?—that thousands will not join the royal standard wherever it may be reared to form the rallying-point of loyalty? Some partners of his crimes may justly fear the punishment of their iniquities, and others dread the loss of rank and title: but be assured, that the main body of the people, when guaranteed in the possession of acquired properties, and ascertained of oblivion with respect to political error, will gladly fly to the paths of peace and duty.

With regard to the question of non-interference, let abstract reasoners theorise as they please; but will the proprietor of any goodly mansion, in private life, permit one of these cosmopolite philosophers to set up a powder-mill in an adjoining fabric, and receive as a sufficient excuse, that he is the chosen tenant of the land-owner, and has a lease executed in due form? Will he suffer him to exercise a dangerous or a noxious trade in his neighbourhood, and not abate the nuisance? Idle follies,—fit only for the drivellers in metaphysics, and unworthy to be listened to by the practical politician and the statesman.

If, however, there should be obstacles in other quarters, which ministers alone can know, and understand the weight of; then, my Lord, it will be your bounden duty, as I am sure it will be

your cordial wish, and vigilant precaution, to see that in any terms which may be offered to the French, they are taught the wide distinction between France under its lawful monarch, and the inhabitants of the French empire as identified with Buonaparte. In the former case, every thing liberal in fact, and gratifying in principle to the honor of a great nation, all which can serve to show the entire disclaiming of every motive of self-interest and of self-aggrandizement on the part of the Allies, should be held out with an unsparing hand: but if they choose the latter alternative, then watch and guard them so on every side, crib and confine them on all points and quarters, as to prevent, if possible, the power of future mischief.

In either contingency, the settling of the numerous clashing interests in almost every part of the Continent; to say what positions should be given up, and which retained; what exchanges are to be made; what compensations allowed, and what indemnities to be arranged, before the world can be completely in a state of rest, must be a matter of subsequent consideration; and will give ample employment to the wisest heads, the coolest tempers, and the best disposed hearts in Europe to determine.

Every probable, almost every possible cause of future disagreement amongst the Continental powers, must be removed and done away; for, of this be certain, if the Arch-Disturber be suffered to continue his reign, unameliorated in principle, but grown wiser from peril, and profiting by experience in iniquity, he will not begin again by venturing on an open attack; but secretly fomenting the slightest cause of jealousy between any two states at present in alliance against him, he will secure a party before he shows the cloven foot; and will endeavor to appear only as a second in the combat.

But forbid it, heaven, that this should be necessary even to be guarded against. The welfare of the world demands his complete extermination, both as a monarch and as a man—

“Sin remissiores esse voluerimus, summæ nobis crudelitatis in patriæ civiumque perniciæ fama subeunda est.”—*Cic. in Catalin.*

FALKLAND.

LETTER II.

MY LORD,

IN my preceding letter I had an opportunity of congratulating you on the prosperous state of the country, with regard to its general politics; in the present, I trust to be found speaking not less favorably of its financial situations, and pecuniary resources. Nor will this, my Lord, prove a task of much difficulty, where there is nothing to pervert, nothing to gloss over, nothing which I shall be constrained to omit, as interfering with the general view of financial prosperity, which the state of public credit allows me to present for your inspection.

Whatever the visionary sophist may have predicted on the fine-spun theories of circulating mediums: whatever the desponding dabbler in financial disquisition may have feared on the subject of national bankruptcy: the universally received and well accredited paper of the Bank of England still continues to assert and give daily practical proof of its undiminished value. And the present state of the British funds; and the unprecedented premiums of the last negotiated loans: as well as the facility with which they were raised; the regular and uninterrupted payment of the public creditors: and the eagerness with which all monied men hasten to place themselves in that situation:—the numerous fleets equipped; the armies almost numberless, either entirely paid, or partly subsidised by England:—the immense taxes levied to an extent before unknown in any age or country; and the productive amount of these impositions increasing, with very few exceptions, and cer-

tainly so on the general average, even amidst the heavy, though unavoidable expenses of a war, burthensome beyond all former precedent ;—all these, my Lord, are testimonies, too substantial to be controverted, of the solid credit and unbounded opulence of Britain, whose fleets bring wealth with every gale that blows.

It would lead me, though I confess it to be a favorable path, into too wide a field for the narrow limits of a letter, to trace the stream of wealth, the British Pactolus, to its golden source, through all the yellow sands, and silvery channels of its long meanderings.

To follow it, from its origin at the Conquest, or even from the reign of the Sixth HENRY ; when the public income was at its lowest ebb, amounting to little more than sixty-four thousand pounds per annum, to its present height when it arises to upwards of eighty millions, would be as unnecessary for your Lordship's information, already so well acquainted with its progress, as it would be dry and tedious to the generality of readers, who, if they choose, may find sufficient materials for satisfying curiosity in the historians of the British revenue.

To the general diffusion of commercial knowledge, and the extended intercourse of mercantile communication ; to the insular and central situation of our islands, placed, as it were, by nature for an entrepot between the old and new worlds : to the active minds, and hardy habits of our islanders ; and, above all, to that unrivalled Constitution, which promotes the spirit of enterprise by securing to the laborer the fruits of his industry—may we attribute the rapid progress of wealth and population, we now enjoy the benefits of ; and by which our posterity will be still more highly benefited ; because, without its present powerful aid, they would have lost the birthright of their inheritance, the fair estate of wealth and independence, by the unprincipled ejection of a low-born, base usurper ; the litigious son of a Corsican pettifogger—the “*Vane Ligur*,” of whom, I trust, we may now fortunately pronounce,

“*Frustraque animis elate superbis,
Néquicquam patrias tentásti lubricus artes.*”

But, gradual as the progress of opulence may appear at first sight, and to common eyes ; the nice observer will not fail to mark

the two great epochs, when the national wealth and credit have, *pari passu*, taken such sudden and strongly marked advances in the path of prosperity. The first, after the passing of the navigation act; when the revenue was more than doubled, rising at once from something below nine hundred thousand pounds per annum to one million and eight hundred thousand pounds, in the short period between that event and the Restoration. A boon so great to this country, as almost tempts one to make it a complete set-off against all the crimes of the Protector, more especially at this time when even they sink almost to a point compared with those of the modern Gallic CROMWELL.

And again in the present reign, since the establishment of the Sinking Fund; that certain guarantee of future undiminished property to our children; the present stable prop of national credit and security. A measure which, in spite of all the attacks of ignorance or malice, is alone sufficient to immortalize the memory of your illustrious friend. For whatever claims may be laid by others to the original principle on which the present Sinking Fund was established; whatever other nearly similar systems may have been proposed; it is impossible to deny to MR. PITT, at least the great and valuable merit of having analysed, selected, and adopted nearly all the best features of the many different plans which had, at various times, been submitted to his, or to the public judgment, by their several authors.

And whatever objections may be brought in argument against the beneficial effects of a Sinking Fund, by those who assert that it is of no avail, whilst you are borrowing with one hand to liquidate with the other, they must, my Lord, be wretched calculators, miserable arithmeticians, who estimate on such mistaken principles as not to distinguish that the sum borrowed is at simple interest only, whilst the Sinking Fund is operating at a compound rate against it.

To make this obvious, it is only necessary to state the case of a nation, which, owing a capital stock debt of six hundred millions in different funds; and possessing a Sinking Fund of fifteen millions per annum, is plunged into a war, which shall last fourteen years, and shall exceed in expense the public income by so much as may render it necessary to borrow or raise in some ex-

traordinary mode, a like annual sum of fifteen millions during the whole term of warfare. We will likewise assume that the three per cents. are at an average price of sixty during the whole term; that the rate of interest is also averaged at five per cent. on money; and that every part of the debt already in existence, or to be created during the war, is accompanied by a Sinking Fund of one third of the rate of interest.

It is clear that, under these assumptions, the Legislature of a country so situated has an option of either applying their existing Sinking Fund to make up the deficit, and thereby equalising the income and the expenditure; or of continuing the invariable appropriation of the Sinking Fund, as originally intended, to redeem the existing debt, and borrowing annual loans to the same amount. At first sight it may appear the same thing, but in the eye of the political arithmetician there will be a striking difference. The total sum to be paid for annual loans, interest, and sinking fund to accompany them, at the rates above-mentioned, will be three hundred and fifteen millions; that is to say, fourteen annual loans of fifteen millions each, amounting together to two hundred and ten millions; and one million per annum for interest and sinking fund on each loan for the different terms, increasing progressively from one to fourteen years, making one hundred and five millions more; or, as above stated, a total of three hundred and fifteen millions: which total would also be the sum, the raising of which, either by loans or taxes, would be avoided by the diversion of the sinking fund. At what expense that saving would be made will soon be seen by adverting to the operations of this fund, if not turned aside from its proper channel. It is proper here, however, to observe, that the two hundred and ten millions borrowed, if invested in the three per cents. at sixty, will have created an additional stock-debt of three hundred and fifty millions, at which last-mentioned rate credit is accordingly given for it in the subsequent part of this comparison.

A sinking fund of fifteen millions per annum, issued quarterly to the persons appointed to superintend the liquidation of the National Debt, and purchasing three per cents. at sixty, would, every quarter of a year, make an accumulation equal to one eightieth part of its last quarterly aggregate, in addition to the three

millions and a quarter issued as the fourth part of the original fifteen millions : the combined effects of all which, at quarterly compound interest, will, at the end of fourteen years, amount to a total redemption of five hundred and eight millions of three per cents. In addition to which we must also take the effect of the same operation on that part of the annual charge of one million, that is to say, one fourth part thereof, which is appropriated to the redemption of the new loans, and which must be added here to the general sinking fund, as the whole of those loans and their accompanying charges are placed against it on the other side of this comparative statement. This last being a quarterly tissue of sixty-two thousand and five hundred pounds upon each loan, with its corresponding accumulation of one eightieth part to the aggregate of every preceding quarter, will, on the same principle, have redeemed fifty-six millions more in the fourteen years ; at the end of which the whole redemption will amount to about five hundred and sixty-four millions of three per cents., by which sum the capital of the National Debt will have been reduced.

The gain to the public in either case, may, therefore, be thus stated : if the sinking fund be applied to the service of the year, the capital stock debt will remain stationary at six hundred millions, as at the commencement of the war, neither being increased nor diminished. So also will the sinking fund at fifteen millions ; and no new taxes will be necessary during the whole period.

If, on the contrary, the sinking fund be continued to its original appropriation, two hundred and ten millions must be raised by loans ; and consequently the capital of the national debt increased by so much ; which invested in three per cents. at sixty, will create an addition of three hundred and fifty millions of stock capital : and one million of new taxes must be raised every year for each successive loan, arising to fourteen millions in the whole ; and amounting to one hundred and five millions paid by the public during the whole period : the ability to do which must always be a main point for consideration in the decision of the Government. These are the disadvantages of the funding system, to counter-balance which is a redemption of five hundred and sixty-four millions of stock ; thereby leaving the unredeemed stock debt at

only three hundred and eighty-six millions at the termination of the war; and therefore less by two hundred and fourteen millions than it was at the commencement of fourteen years of war expenditure. And the sinking fund, which at the beginning of the period was only fifteen millions per annum, is now increased to thirty five millions, or more than doubled. This augmented fund will now be at the option of the Legislature; either to apply the whole to the extinction of the remaining debt, which it will effect in something less than nine years, at five per cent., not quite nine and an half at four per cent., or about nine and three quarters at three per cent.; or they may relieve the public at once from thirty millions of taxes, by reducing the sinking fund to five millions; which will extinguish the remaining debt in something less than thirty-three years at five per cent., in thirty-six years at four per cent., and in about forty-one years at three per cent. Or they may take any intermediate point in the scale, which may be most suitable to the existing circumstances and future prospects of the kingdom.

Upon this comparative statement, and I am certain that it is both a clear and a correct one, of the counterbalancing circumstances of the two systems, it is evident how greatly the comparison is in favor of the invariable application of the sinking fund to its original purpose; always assuming, however, the ability of the nation to furnish the necessary means for continuing such a system. And here, my Lord, we have fortunately the power of producing practical proof of such ability by bringing the case home to this country, where the exertions have been so much greater, and continued for a period so much longer, than those already stated. And where, during a warfare of more than twenty years, far exceeding in expense every limit that has been touched upon in the

600 Millions at the commencement.
350 Ditto. New Stock-created.
950 Ditto. Total Debt.
564 Ditto. Redeemed during War.
386 Ditto. Remaining unredeemed.
214 Ditto. Less at termination than at commencement.

preceding statement, the means for furnishing these extraordinary expenditures have been invariably provided up to the last year, without any interruption whatever to the rapidly increasing operations of the Sinking Fund ; which in one year (1808) actually exceeded in redemption by upwards of one million the additional debt created in that year. And there can be no doubt, but that if our expenditure could, with any degree of prudential policy, have been properly confined to the limits of our own shores, and the local defence of our own colonies, the extensive effects of that fund would have been to cover, and even to exceed, all our excesses beyond the annual income of the nation. But the circumstances of the times, and the general politics of Europe, imperiously demanded a more enlarged and liberal scale of exertion ; and the present prospect of affairs on the Continent sufficiently attests the wisdom of the measure.

There are, however, limits to every human exertion ; and occasional periods must occur at which it may be proper to relax, and give a breathing-time to the resources of the most opulent and liberally inclined community. I have, therefore, felt always disposed to listen rather favorably to all such propositions as have been grounded on this principle ; and when the financial plan of 1807 was brought forward by LORD HENRY PETTY, I was clearly of opinion that it was worth trial for three or four years, or not exceeding five years at the most, during all which time its effects would be found to be beneficial ; though I completely disapproved of the extended term of fourteen years ; because, long before the expiration of that time, the heavy burthen of the supplementary loans would have been found to outweigh very considerably all the advantages gained by the temporary relief from taxation procured by the assistance of the portions of war taxes pledged to provide for the annual charge of the principal loans in each year ; and it seems to me as if the framers of that plan had been seduced by the flattering appearance of the successive release of the pledged war taxes to overlook, or at least to under-estimate, the heavy burthen preparing for the shoulders of posterity in the vast increase of the supplementary loans towards the end, as well as their oppressive weight long after the expiration of their extended term of years in the second series.

During the last Session another measure was proposed and carried into execution for raising the necessary supplies for the current year, and for the three next ensuing, taking the loans at eight and twenty millions for each year, without the imposition of any new taxes: excepting that in the first year a moderate portion was to be raised, for the purpose of making provision to supply and make good certain omissions in the general Sinking Fund Act of 1802; or perhaps it would be more correct to say, to make good the deficiencies occasioned by the alterations to be made in certain provisions of the act of 1802.

To examine and weigh the merits of this measure, and of the several arguments which have been advanced on both sides, either for or against it, would require more time and space than the nearly expiring limits which must be assigned to this address, will allow me to devote to the discussion at this moment. I shall, therefore, make it the subject of another letter; and, for the present, take my leave with this general assertion, that whatever differences of opinion may have prevailed with respect either to the principle, or to the detail of any past financial operations, no one can venture at this day to deny that the firm and well-built argosy of British wealth has stood unhurt the roughest gales and most enduring storms that ever gallant vessel was assailed by; that all the wily arts and rancorous devices of our bitter enemy, to break the sinews and waste the substance of that commerce which he knows and feels to be the groundwork of the world's resistance to his mad ambition, have proved of no avail, and have only fallen with redoubled force on his own head; and that unless, like his

¹ At this moment the French and English funds exhibit the following comparison.—The French five per cents. are at 49, therefore the English three per cents. should be only 29 2-5ths; but the latter are now selling at 67, consequently, the former should be worth 111 2-3ds, or between two and three times as much as they actually are; and at any rate full double, after allowing for the more marketable rate of the three per cents. as a favorite stock.

The French flag is not to be seen, whilst British vessels are spread over the seas, conveying merchandise to and from every corner of the world. •

So much for ships, colonies, and commerce!!!

valiant and wise friends the Americans, he could find out some sub-marine explosion, some invisible torpedo, to blow up the goodly vessel and her gallant crew at once, his efforts will ever prove alike fruitless and impotent ;

“ Et, nisi validioribus impulsa machinis, in eternum foret inconcussa.”

FALKLAND.

LETTER III.

MY LORD,

Towards the conclusion of my second letter, I alluded to my intention of entering into the merits of the financial measure of the last session, for raising the necessary supplies for that and the three next years, without the imposition of any new taxes during that time ; excepting only in the first year, when an annual sum, rather short of eight hundred and seventy thousand pounds was to be raised by permanent taxes, to make good a provision for redeeming the capital of eighty-six millions, and upwards, omitted to be provided for in the several acts by which the said capital had been raised ; and for which no specific provision had been subsequently assigned by the Consolidating Sinking Fund Act of 1802 ; under which this portion of capital remained undistinguished in the general mass of stock debt, to the redemption of the total whereof, the General Sinking Fund was indiscriminately applicable.

A further annual sum of two hundred and sixty thousand pounds, which was to be raised by additional war taxes, was also

proposed to be added to the Sinking Fund, for the purpose of enabling the Commissioners to commence and carry on the liquidation of twenty-six millions of out-standing Exchequer bills, until the same could be funded, or otherwise provided for; so that the total addition proposed to be made to the Sinking Fund, and the only new taxes intended to be called for in the four years, would amount, in all, to one million, one hundred and twenty-seven thousand, six hundred and ninety-three pounds. And in order to prevent the further imposition of additional taxes, it was proposed to require the assistance of the Sinking Fund, by cancelling so much of the stock already bought up by the Commissioners, and standing in their names at the Bank, as should thereby release, and place at the disposal of Government, an annual sum equal to the whole charge of the loans to be raised for the service of the current year; at the same time certainly taking away so much of the reducing power of the General Sinking Fund.

Against this measure much has been said; though I think, with more plausibility than reason, and with more violence than either. It has been called a breach of faith towards the public creditor; and a flagrant departure from the principles of the great founder of the system.

With respect to the alleged breach of faith to the public creditor, I have turned it over in my own mind most seriously, and, with the utmost deliberation, weighed the different bearings of the measure as to his situation, and confess, that I cannot find out the injury. If I comprehend rightly the principles of public loans, they are, that the creditor advances a certain sum of money, as an equivalent for which he receives the investment of a portion of stock capital fully equal in value, at the money price of the day, to the sum so advanced, and on which he is to receive a certain stipulated rate of interest, at fixed periods, until the capital shall be repaid; the period for which is not to be at the option of the lender, but at such time as shall be at the convenience and determination of the legislature, according to certain general or specific stipulations; provided always, that the repayment is to be at the full nominal value of the stock capital, that is to say, at par. But for the convenience of the lender, who may not wish to wait for such re-payment until the time suitable for the Government to

repay, the stock-capital is at all times transferable; and every new holder, whose name appears as such in the Government books, becomes instantly vested with all the right, title, and estate of the original creditor, who, we know, seldom keeps his share of the different stocks in which his money has been funded, longer than till a moderate premium enables him to sell his portion of what is vulgarly called the *Omnium*, to a certain advantage: to him, therefore, the period of repayment by Government can be no object; and, indeed, as the greater part of the stockholders regard the placing of their money in the public funds only as a safe mode of temporary employment, where it can always be got at with the shortest notice, they, therefore, are in a nearly similar situation. And by those who purchase into the funds in order to secure an ascertained regular income, with the least possible risk or trouble, to them it can be no great difficulty to determine whether the hour of repayment is an object of dread or expectation; whether it is one of their days

“Cretâ an carbone notandi.”

To the creditors in general, whether original lenders or subsequent purchasers, the two great points seem to be, the regular payment of their interest, and the avoiding of any such violent or ill-judged measures of finance as might deteriorate the value of the capital, beyond those common fluctuations occasioned by the vicissitudes of war, which are not within the power of the national Government to control, and the chance of which is necessarily implied in the original contract.

The period of repayment, therefore, appears to be of no other consequence to the stock-holder, than as it may be productive of good or bad effect, with regard to either of the two last-mentioned points: and with respect to the first of the two, it seems to be quite out of question, as to any probable, or almost possible bearing: at least so much so as to render it totally unnecessary to say any thing more on that head.

As to the deterioration of capital, the most immediate, and most injuriously operating cause of this, would be a forced lowering of the rate of interest, without the option of being paid off at par: a measure fit only for the imperious necessities of a military

despot, on the verge of bankruptcy : but far different from the fair and honorable alternative given to the public by Mr. Pelham, in the judicious act of 1750, when every holder of four per cent. stock was allowed to take the choice, of either receiving the full amount of his capital at par, or otherwise from and after the 25th of December, 1750, to receive 3 and an half per cent. till the 25th of December, 1757, and from thenceforth three per cent. only. The consequence of this enactment was, that the greater part of the proprietors gladly submitted to the reduction of interest, and the remainder were punctually paid off at the full nominal value of their stock ; that is to say, one hundred pounds sterling for every hundred of stock capital. Another most equitable feature of the measure being, that the whole of the duties originally appropriated to the payment of the interest were still continued, and the surplus of them, after paying the reduced dividends, was incorporated with the Sinking Fund for the discharge of the capital : and such was the general feeling on the propriety and justice of the measure, that even the reduced stock itself scarcely experienced any depression, in consequence of the reduction of the interest.

The day is, in all probability, at no great distance, I mean within a very few years, when the same measure may be safely and fairly resorted to again, without any prejudice to the public creditor ; and without the smallest violation of faith with respect to the original contract ; which only stipulated that Government should pay him five, or four per cent. (as the case may be) for the use of his money, until it shall be convenient to make that repayment which is thereby offered to him ; unless, by a new agreement, he shall consent to lend it again at a lower rate of interest, being as much as he could then obtain on any equally good security elsewhere.

It now remains to consider what charges have been brought against the measure of last session, as productive either of actual immediate, or of probable future injurious consequence to the value of the present stock-holder's capital, by delaying the repayment or liquidation of the loans whereof his stock forms a part, or by any other means, and what foundation there is in truth for the charges so alleged.

I do not enter into any reply to the attacks which have been

made on your Right Honorable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer,—that he acts as if he thought the more the expenditure exceeded the income, the less necessity to augment the revenue; that he chose the precise moment to rest from taxation when the existing taxes were falling short in production to an unprecedented degree; that he goes the length of declaring, that the sinking fund shall be a sinking fund no longer, and that, instead of being a provision for the extinction of the national debt, it shall be converted into a provision for facilitating its increase. Such arguments, or rather such assertions, for they are nothing more, carry their own refutation with them, saving even the necessity of appealing to the well-known rectitude and exemplary integrity of Mr. Vansittart, both in private and public life.

Neither shall I waste a moment on the comparison of the *Tiers Consolidés à la mode de Paris*, nor the mention of the application of the sponge to the national debt altogether; such allusions are of a cast too jacobinical to merit serious argument; and I can only lament that the pure fountain of political knowledge, consecrated to the memory of Mr. Pitt, and under the auspices of his friends, should be so disturbed as to emit a stream of such discoloration.

With respect to the depressed value of capital, as arising from the deferred period of repayment, I am not aware of more than one mode in which this can operate, that is, by suffering the market to be overloaded with stock on sale, in proportion to the number of purchasers wanting to buy; which, as in all other cases of product and demand, must leave the seller in the hands of his antagonist, and consequently lower the marketable value of his commodity;—and in this view, therefore, certainly the more the sinking fund is strengthened, and the less its operations are confined, the more likely is the stock to be kept up to its full value, and the better is the stock-holder likely to be secured against loss of capital; at the same time, also, that the more the stock is guarded from depression in time of war, on so much the better terms can the Government negotiate the necessary loans. But there is also an error to be avoided on the other extreme of the scale, and it is very possible that the purchases of the sinking fund may have an injurious effect on money transactions, by absorbing too much of the floating stock, and leaving too small a capital of unredeemed debt

for the necessary transfer of the public in general; and this we know would be the case very soon after the return of peace. For supposing this to be the last year of the war, and taking the sinking fund (on the old system) to be fifteen millions and a half on the 1st of February, 1815, and the total unredeemed debt at that period (including the floating debt to be funded) to amount to six hundred and seventy millions; and from that time to make purchases on an average at three and a half per cent. (equal to three per cents. at 85 7-10ths), the total debt would be extinguished in about twenty-eight years from thence, or some time in the year 1843; from whence it is evident, that, at any rate, the sinking fund would require reducing in a short time after the return of peace; that is to say, soon after the whole expenses of the war are fairly and completely wound up and provided for.

The period of repayment being always uncertain, as depending on the question of war or peace, as to the discharge by paying off at par, and on the market price of the funds for liquidation by gradual purchase, the Government never being compellable to repay unless the stock in question is at par, it has been thought proper to name a certain limited time, within which the discharge of loans should be generally confined; and this was very properly stated by Mr. Pitt, on the first establishment of his sinking fund, to be forty-five years, being the time beyond which it is very unlikely that the gradual liquidation should be protracted under almost any circumstances; because, taking a loan to be invested in three per cents. at sixty, with a sinking fund of one hundredth part of the stock capital, or rather of one-third of the rate of interest, (which last-mentioned proportion should be invariably kept to, as the lowest rate of liquidation, and also as giving every different sort of stock of which the omnium is generally composed, an equal power of redemption), and supposing that this loan should rise immediately to ninety-five, and so continue during the whole progress of liquidation, still the uttermost period of redemption would not be extended beyond forty-four years and a quarter; and even if the whole were to be purchased back at par, which is quite improbable to suppose, the period would then only be stretched to forty-six years and a half; but as the general state of the world may fairly allow the hypothesis of equal alternations of war and peace, in the

former of which the price may be taken from fifty-five to sixty-five, and in the latter from eighty-five to ninety-five, the general average will be correctly assumed at seventy-five, which gives a liquidating period of something less than thirty-six years.

But I have thoroughly inspected the tables annexed to the Chancellor's plan, and though I have not examined them so minutely as to go through the calculating process upon every one of the data, yet, having had occasion to do so with several of them, and finding those sufficiently accurate, the difference, where found, consisting only in Mr. Vansittart's having taken the round numbers against himself, I have no reason to doubt the correctness of the whole; and as these tables give me no room for crediting any breach of faith to the public creditor by delay of repayment, but rather the contrary; and as the counter-tables produced do not venture to point out any such thing, the argumentum ad "*fidem et fiduciam*" seems to me to drop to the ground. The principal, and indeed the only objection to the plan in which I can concur, being that which states the impolicy of transferring the operations of the sinking fund from the time of war, when the price of redemption is low, to that of peace, when it is so much advanced.

Concurring with you, therefore, on the ground of principle, I have yet, my Lord, to claim the exercise of the indulgence requested in my first Letter, for an occasional shade, and it is only a shade, of difference on the question of expediency.

Under all the existing circumstances, and with all the future prospects, I think that I should have refrained from any actual diversion of the sinking fund from its original object for the present. And this the more especially, as every purpose of relief from taxation might have been obtained through another channel.

The sinking fund has, ever since its first establishment, been, and deservedly so, an object of great public jealousy; and however popular prejudice may err in point of discreet limitation, it is nevertheless generally grounded on something like sound principle at the bottom. And I think that having the option of doing otherwise, I should rather have chosen to avoid interfering with a prejudice so reasonable during the short period upon which it was fair to calculate that the war would be likely to continue.

With a perfect concurrence, therefore, in the Act for enabling

Government generally to amend and alter the several statutes passed in His Majesty's reign for the redemption of the national debt, and for making further provision in respect thereof, I should have rested there for the present ; and, instead of bringing in those which followed for the actual appropriation of specific portions of the sinking fund, I should have secured my loans on a further pledge of part of the war taxes, either making those loans sufficiently large to cover their own charges for the first year, by replacing in the supplies of that year so much of the war taxes as were pledged for the interest and sinking fund ; or keeping the loans to the exact amount required for the expenditure, have supplied the deficit of the war taxes by Exchequer bills, with a provision in each loan bill for allowing Government, by any subsequent enactment, to release the war taxes pledged, or any part thereof, and to transfer the security of the annual charge, either to the sinking fund, or to any other part of the consolidated fund, which might be deemed most convenient at the time.

This previous stipulation would effectually guard against any subsequent charge of breach of faith towards the lender or his assignee ; would enable Government, at the return of peace, either to take off the war taxes entirely, by transferring the annual charge to such part of the redeemed interests of cancelled capital, as the sinking fund might then be well able to spare with benefit to the general state of the money-market, or by imposing such new taxes as might be found more productive, and better suited to a state of peace than those imposed for the period of war ; or to perpetuate such part of the war taxes as might be likely to continue equally productive in time of peace ; a choice which I cannot but think it might have been well for Government to retain in its own hands till that period.

It has been said, with more plausibility than depth of thought, that borrowing upon the war taxes is borrowing at compound interest ; but this is mere unvouched assertion ; nor can any mathematical demonstration be produced in proof of this being more the case with regard to them than to any other species of imposition in which the deficit occasioned by their diversion must be supplied by money borrowed upon interest : the idea has probably been suggested by the supplementary loans which formed a part of the plan

of 1807. Though I agree with a much abler financier, who has said that the war taxes in general are not calculated to mortgage for any length of time, or to any great extent, because many of them would not be productive in time of peace.

How early the sinking fund became a favorite of the public, was evinced by its immediate effect on the price of stocks. The bill for its establishment being passed in the second week of May, 1786, and before the end of the same month the Consols had risen from $69\frac{1}{8}$ to $74\frac{1}{2}$, and the stocks in general full five per cent.

I beg, however, my Lord, to be understood as by no means combating the plan, when I only suggest an improvement which I think would embrace all the advantages, whilst it would avoid the only inconvenient circumstance attending it; and as yet so little has been taken from the power of the sinking fund as to give very little room for reasonable objection. The original sinking fund of 1786 was limited by Mr. Pitt to four millions, at which maximum he very correctly calculated that it would arrive in the space of twenty-eight years from that time: but supposing the act of 1802, and all the subsequent statutes which have occasioned any deviation from the original enactment, not to have taken place, that sinking fund, by its own accumulative powers, and by the helps afforded by the additional two hundred thousand pounds given to it in 1792, and by the expired annuities, amounting to about four hundred and ninety-four thousand six hundred pounds, (which fell in chiefly in 1808), would by this time have risen to rather more than five millions per annum; therefore, assuming the whole of this fund to be taken away, and applied to the charge of new loans, the total of the remaining sinking fund of 1815, applied to the whole of the unredeemed debt existing at the same time, either on the supposition of continued peace, or even of ultimate portions of peace and war every ten years from that time, would liquidate the whole of that capital considerably within the assigned period of forty-five years. Nevertheless, my Lord, I am still inclined to think that it would, on the whole, have been preferable to let the fund remain undisturbed till the return of peace, when we might with more certain security have taken upon us to pronounce,

“Vectigal, et onera commerciorum resolvimus.”

FALKLAND.

LETTER IV.

MY LORD,

At length the auspicious moment seems to be arrived, when Europe may, with safety, declare its open wish, nor fear resistance even from the voice of France herself. The Star of BOURBON, so long eclipsed and veiled in night, now shows itself above the horizon with relumined splendor, whilst the baleful Meteor of Ajaccio sets, as I trust, with all its train of horrors, in everlasting darkness.

The return to loyalty and reason will be at least as rapid, and beyond all doubt, more permanent than the departure from them.

“Already has the child of Gallia’s school
 “The foul philosophy that sins by rule;
 “With all her train of reasoning, damning arts,
 “Begot by brilliant heads on worthless hearts;
 “Like things that quicken after Nilus’ flood,
 “The venom’d birth of sunshine and of mud:”—

Already has this foul and misbegotten imp—this illegitimate offspring of dulness and false genius, lost its evanescent sway over the deluded minds of Frenchmen, and wherever they can find protection from the Tyrant and his satellites, the magistracy and the people alike resume the plain unvarnished language, and utter the wholesome dictates of common sense, as if the advance of the British, like the touch of the Angelic steel, had roused them from the transitory incoherent follies of a deep deluding dream to the sober realities of waking truth.

So rapid has been the reverse, that it is not improbable, ere this can meet your Lordship’s eye, the reign of usurpation may be completely extinguished; and the Usurper himself have met the fate he merits. No; my Lord,—not the fate he merits, for that would be the rack and wheel, the ignominious exit of a blood-stained malefactor; but the far more honorable, though not less certain termination of a soldier in the field of battle. Let us not, however, cavil at the mode, so that we obtain the end; nor object

to any casualty that rids the world of such a monster of iniquity, whose whole life has exhibited a constant scene of enmity to all mankind, whose frozen stony bosom has presented only one unvarying specimen of

—— “ Heartless speculative ill ;
All youth’s transgression, with all age’s chill ;
“ The apathy of wrong, the bosom’s ice ;
“ A slow and cold stagnation into vice.”

Rather let us rejoice, my Lord, at any fate which saves an English Gentleman the fear of being prevented from paying the accustomed tribute of his loyal affection and duty to his Sovereign’s throne, lest he should be shouldered in his Prince’s drawing-room by one of the pickpocket Princes, or unfettered Peers of the Corsican Court ; by the midnight murderer CAULAINCOURT, the butcher SUCHET, or the merciless and insatiable thief DAVOUST.

From scenes, and fears of scenes, like these, with what heartfelt satisfaction do I turn to contemplate the well-deserved, the transcendently triumphant glories of my native country ; and most sincerely do I congratulate you, my Lord, and your Brother Ministers, on being relieved from the hard necessity of listening to the cold dictates of political expediency, whilst every better feeling of your bosoms must long since have pressed you to the bold avowal of equitable right and moral principle. The disgrace of treating with the mock Emperor, of raising the low-born family of BUONAPARTE to a height above the illustrious House of Brunswick, is now, thank God, no more a point in question. With the real Sovereign of the French, with the descendant of the great HENRI, with LOUIS XVIII. you will not be afraid to negotiate on the fairest and most liberal terms, convinced that what is agreed to solemnly, will be kept religiously : for whatever errors may have marked the early part of the career of the Bourbon Princes—to whatever erratic gallantries or dissipated extravagancies the youthful ebullitions of high and ardent spirits, nursed in the soft, luxurious lap of royalty, may heretofore have given birth, now chastened and subdued by the severe, but useful lessons of long-endured adversity, and counselled by the constant experience of the mild and limited rule of British Monarchy, their

conduct, when restored to the throne and fortunes of their ancestors, will doubtless prove to be but a continuance of the benevolent government of their martyred predecessor, too merciful only for the times in which he lived; and all their youthful follies will have been equally long abandoned and contemned.

“ Spento il vigor che i van desir nodriva,
 “ In ogni cor non sol vien manco amore;
 “ Ma chi piu arse, del suo folie errore
 “ Di ricordarsi pur abborre e schiva.”

And after all, even allowing to the Usurper the full extent of talent claimed for him by his besotted admirers in this country, but which I deny to him, and admitting that the lawful princes were as far below him in the intellectual scale, as I do not believe them to be, although they may not be able to manœuvre a brigade of soldiers with quite so much accurate rapidity; the people of France would then only have to decide, by its insulated merits in the present instance, on a question which their favorite NECKAR has said cannot be submitted to any general decision on simple and abstract principles.

“ L'on a quelquefois agité, si un homme sans principes, mais qui reuniroit à des grandes lumieres un esprit supérieur, n'étoit pas plus convenable à l'administration qu'un homme vertueux mais depourvu de talens. C'est une question du nombre de celles qui ne peuvent jamais être soumises à une décision simple et absolue.”

Our old school acquaintance *ÆSOP* has, however, settled this matter much more easily than the Swiss Financier; and I am apt to imagine, that the French, if left to themselves, completely independent of all control, either foreign or domestic, would not be long in returning to the gentle sway of King Log, rather than continue subject to the voracious appetite of the conscriptive Stork.

Anxiously, nevertheless, as I feel expectant of the restoration of the House of BOURBON to their ancient seat in France, I am by no means desirous of endangering that balance of power, which I trust to see so soon restored in Europe, by suffering too many countries to remain subject to the sway of one family. France and Spain are full enough to be governed by the Princes of that

race; it will, therefore, be an act of wisdom, not to permit any part of Italy to continue under the dominion of a branch of the same stock; and a compact and powerful kingdom founded there, whose Sovereign shall not be connected in blood with either of the houses of Bourbon or of Lorraine, would be a measure most advisable. But I confess, at the same time, my Lord, that I cannot approve of the man who is already seated on the throne of Naples; neither his connexions nor his moral qualities are such as I could wish. Besides, I think, such a wide distinction in the ultimate destinies of BUONAPARTE and his brother-in-law, has too much of the “*eadem diverso crimina fato;*” and though I am perfectly ready to adjudge the “*ille crucem,*” I am not quite so well disposed to allow the “*hic diadema.*”

Mr. BURKE, indeed, has given us a dispensation from high birth, when he says, “There is no qualification for government but virtue and wisdom, actual or presumptive. Wherever they are actually found, they have, in whatever state, condition, profession, or trade, the passport of Heaven to human place and power.” But then, my Lord, we must have the existence of the wisdom and the virtue in actual proof, before we admit the validity of the certificate.

I have said, in a former letter, that even when the active part of the contest shall be over in the field, there will and must be much serious matter of discussion remaining for the Cabinet. The whole face of Europe has been so completely convulsed and distorted; such changes of territory, such dislocations of jurisdiction have taken place in almost every country on the Continent, that without attempting to reduce the whole to a complete and perfect *status quo ante bellum*, which, under the existing circumstances, would, perhaps, be quite impracticable, it will yet require a long and undivided attention from the wisdom of the wisest, and the temper of the most temperate of European statesmen, to reconcile the jarring interests, and give any thing like a satisfactory settlement to the claims of the many powers concerned. But this, my Lord, however intricate in its discussion, and tedious as to its duration, is a point not so much dangerous as troublesome. The nations of the continent have suffered too deeply already from the long, lengthened period of years consumed in warfare; have

had too much of actual distress brought home to their very doors, and mostly even to their fire sides, to be easily seduced into a renewal of hostilities with one another, for the sake of claims, either doubtful in themselves, or admitting of convenient and adequate compensation. And your own country, though happily exempted from local suffering or loss of foreign possession, has yet endured such heavy burthens, and submitted to such enormous sacrifices in finance, that the moment of peace, when peace can be honorably and safely procured, must be most anxiously sighed for by every man of every party and description.

Let, then, the knell of the Tyrant, the common enemy of all mankind, be once but actually rung, and the world may safely rest upon its arms immediately; and all the anxieties, and almost all the burthens of warfare, may be at once thrown aside. In such a case, I see nothing to prevent the return, in a very short period, to the common expenditure of a peace establishment; not, indeed, the low establishment of five and twenty years back, but such as would, however, admit of great and essential relief to the public burthens immediately.

But far, very far different, indeed, must be the prospect, under any peace that could be made with BUONAPARTE. What Minister, my Lord, would be bold enough to disarm this Country under such a contingency? I have heard it said that the allied powers would compel the enemy to a similar measure. My Lord, it is impossible; there is no power on earth which could enforce a disarming of BUONAPARTE's strength, similar in all its consequences to the disarraying of the military force of Britain. Let us recollect the tedious, tardy process by which we have arrived at our present strength in the field, and on the ocean; remember all the statutes for encouraging yeomanry cavalry, and volunteer infantry; the numberless volunteerings from the militia; the limited and unlimited service men; with all the various plans that have been contrived to increase our armies by slow and painful steps; and say, what proportionate force they all bear to the energetic rapidity of a single conscription. The Corsican Emperor might be without a soldier, beyond the *Imperial* Guards of his *sucred* and *illustrious* person, one day, and would have a formidable army almost on the next. No *real* Sovereign, no Monarch, governing

by known and ascertained laws, could possibly execute such vigorous and decisive measures; and therefore, in the commencement of a struggle, the advantage is entirely with a Despot; the "*Imperator solus et conditor et interpret leges*," whose quick and uncontrolled attacks resemble the feverish, phrenetic, but powerful exertions of a madman; whilst time and coolness can give due effect only towards the latter end of the contest, to the warier efforts of health and sanity. Of these England has, at present, the full benefit; so, indeed, has all Europe; ought we, then, to throw away this hard-earned, slowly acquired superiority, without the prospect of some certain and equivalent advantage; but where that equivalent is to be found, in what form it is to be presented to us, I am sure I know not; and I think it would puzzle the most acute politician to point it out.

Were Peace, in any reasonably durable shape, to be attained, no one could be more sincerely rejoiced by the event than myself; but the hollow, fallacious, insecure, armed truce, which is all that we could conclude with BUONAPARTE, under the semblance only of real Peace, the "*Bellum involutum pacis nomine*," is a thousand times more to be dreaded and deprecated, than a continuance, however long protracted, of open war.

"Et optem,
"Jupiter, ut sit, ait; metuo tamen omnia."

The successes of the allies, of which every day brought fresh accounts, seemed, a short time since, to put this out of question. The masterly combinations of simultaneous movements on the Marne, the Aisne, the Aube, and the Seine; and the hurried and distracted rapidity with which the surrounded Corsican was obliged to turn his defensive operations from one point to another, sufficiently evinced the falling state of his fortune, and "gave dreadful note of preparation," for the near approaching conclusion of the Tyrant's bloody career. But with all this fair outside show of union and vigor, there was something rotten at the core, which paralysed the best energies of Russia, and reduced the heroic valor of the brave Prussians, and their immortal commander, to be of no avail; and when the inimitable skill of the

veteran **BLUCHER** had foiled the Corsican on every point, when every eye was turned, with anxious expectation, to the immediate march of the Austrians to the French metropolis—what followed—a fearful pause—which, thanks to the uncertain councils of **FRANCIS**, threw away a precious moment for decisive action, worth whole ages of irresolute hesitation, or torpid inactivity. Nor am I mainly satisfied with him who seems to say so much and do so little; and, contented with having wrested a province from the Crown of Denmark for his own purpose, still keeps his forces idly lingering

“I’ the North,
“When they should serve their Sovereign in the West.”

It is such half-faced fellowship as this that has kept all Britain in the aguish fevery intermissions of hope and fear; one moment expecting the downfall of the Usurper, and the next, dreading to hear of a treaty with the bloodiest Monster that ever disgraced alliance.

But now, thank Heaven, the shivering fit is past; and the glorious progress of our triumphant **WELLINGTON**, and the unbiassed declaration of the whole people of that portion of the French kingdom which is at liberty to declare itself, have decided the question beyond the power of the whining, puling advocates of peace to alter.

Even if preliminary articles were signed, which **GOD**, for the honor and security of every true Englishman, forbid—come when they will, they are now of no avail;—they must, as has so energetically been said, be mere waste paper. We have no power to sign away the rights of a whole nation, by the acknowledgment of an Usurper, against the voice of the people over whom he has usurped his sway. I could go much further in this argument, but it would be a waste of time—the measure will execute itself; and the French will have their own Sovereign in spite of all opposition.

It is to be hoped, that the Parisians themselves will be the principal actors in the concluding scene of the tragedy, and that the Royalists of the Gallic metropolis will redeem their city’s reputation, by bringing the monstrous malefactor to the bar of

justice on the very spot where his Royal Master had bled so many years before ; but be that as it may, let him but bleed in any place or mode, and the world will once more be at rest and in security.

Yet, independently of the great principle of retributive justice on this rank offender, it is to be wished, for the sake of literature and the fine arts, that Paris, the present museum and depôt of every sacred relic of ancient skill, or specimen of modern ingenuity ; that the grand magazine of every thing valuable to the man of taste and science, should not be exposed to the desolating and irremediable ravages of savage ignorance and rapacity ; and the best chance of avoiding this, seems at present to be by the recal of the lawful Prince, and the execution of summary justice on the traitor who has usurped his place ; for if once the Cossacks enter the Gallic metropolis, we may expect to hear of the Louvre and the Thuilleries, the splendid palaces of the ancient Kings of France, being consumed in flames ; and what would be more irreparable to the world at large—all the fine monuments of Grecian sculpture and matchless productions of the Italian Schools of Painting ; all that the combined efforts of science, taste, and genius have drawn from long past ages, to soften and ameliorate the mind of man, would sink together in one common wreck, nor leave a vestige of a loss, beyond the power of time to remedy.

If, however, the Princes of France are sufficiently active to prevent this scene of devastation ; if the Allied Sovereigns and their Generals are actuated by due liberality and clear judgment ; and, above all, if the Parisians themselves are duly sensible of their own interests and duty, and disclaim the Usurper, and invite their lawful Sovereign (by his brother and representative) to his ancient metropolis, then, as I trust it will, may the threatened storm pass innocuously over the domes of Paris, and the treasures of antiquity and genius yet be safe from spoliation.

Indeed, the restoration of the lawful Government, by the return of the BOURBONS to their hereditary throne, is the only certain guarantee of permanent peace in Europe ; that is to say, of such a peace as might be looked to for any reasonable presumption of continuance. It was this alone which could justify the passage of

the Rhine, this the only legitimate object of carrying the arms of the Allies within the boundaries of ancient France.

"Hæc est illa dies mihi quam Rubiconis ad undas

"Promissam memini, cujus spe movimus arma."

FALKLAND.

LETTER V.

MY LORD,

AMIDST the great and glorious events which have passed in such rapid succession, during the short period elapsed since I had ¹ last the honor of addressing your Lordship, selection of subject seems to be almost as much foiled by the equal magnitude and importance of the facts, as the multiplicity of them would convert my letter into a volume in the vain attempt to philosophize on the whole in detail. Let us be satisfied that the general result is the downfall of tyranny, the restoration of lawful government, the freedom of Europe—and the world at peace! Whilst Britain—proud, triumphant, happy Britain, in full possession of the '*sune superbiam quæsitam meritis,*' with conscious worth smiles at the glorious prospect, and assumes it for her own; the grateful produce of her long endured, her steady perseverance in the cause of justice, and of suffering virtue.

In my last, my Lord, I took the liberty of pointing out what seemed to me to be the only branch of the alternative in the power of the Allies to offer with security, of France with safety to accept. —Thank Heaven, the die is cast, and ours the goodly prize: innocu-

¹ Let. IV. Tuesday, March 29, 1814.

ously, indeed, has the whirlwind passed over the domes of Paris ;¹ and the breath of war no longer swells the storm, or loads the desolating gale with the groans of dying thousands. Art has no ravaged monuments to weep for, and Science lifts her soothing voice only to call her distant votaries from the field of bloodshed, to rally once again beneath her peaceful banner. A long continued perfect state of peace now promises to await us ;

“ En aurea nascitur ætas.

“ Et proles antiqua redit, concordia, virtus,

“ Cumque Fide Pictas altâ cervice vagatur.”²

A fruitful golden age of amicable commerce claims to succeed the sterile years of iron warfare we have passed ; the fell destroyer quashed, and all his horrible atrocities for ever ended, the silken bonds of amity unite us to that amiable descendant of the sainted LOUIS, whose parting words,³ in warmest gratitude for long continued hospitality and steady persevering succor, breathed forth friendship and prosperity to every son of Britain.

Be it the first and proudest task of renovated art, and science late restored, to designate the happy portrait of the parting Sovereigns ; the painter's pencil cannot choose a fairer subject than the princely Ruler of the British realms ; his footing on the utmost verge of England's warlike shore : his eye commanding his own subject ocean ;

¹ It will, probably, be in your Lordship's recollection, as it is perfectly within mine, that, in an early stage of the French Revolution, an expression dropt from you in the House of Commons, which was then much criticised by the opposite side of the House, with respect to the practicability of a march to Paris ; perhaps, now that the fact has actually come to pass, and that, most singularly, in your Lordship's own administration, some of those gentlemen will be able to furnish us with hypercriticisms on their own strictures.

² Claudian in Rufinum.

³ The reply of Louis XVIII. to the Mayor and Magistrates of Dover.

himself the leader of a host of freemen, whose loud, unbiassed, animating voices, directed by the waving of his royal hand, lend their concurrent aiding to the cannon's thunder, to waft, from shore to shore, the stamp and promise of an age of peace, which rises to approving Heaven for sacred record; whilst the proud vessel, conscious of her royal burthen, in stately swiftness glides along the glassy main:—on the deck appears the attractive loveliness of female gratitude dissolved in tears of joy, surrounded by her princely relatives; but leaving to imagination to depict the absent LOUIS, like the Grecian Monarch at the sacrifice of AULIS, oppressed by feelings too exquisitely keen to be embodied by the painter's art.

“To the pen of history a more imperishable, though perhaps less generally communicated, record of the rapturous scene will be assigned; and future ages, whilst they feel the blessed effects of mild and lawful government, will learn to estimate, with due appreciation, the virtuous patriotism, and long enduring perseverance, of their heroic ancestors; nor will they then, my Lord, refuse to you, and to your colleagues, the well-deserved and hard-earned tribute of their praise, for twenty years of unabated and unwearied labor in the cause of justice.

“In a former Letter¹ I ventured to assert, what has for years been my unvaried judgment, that the world would some day feel, and own, how much it had been duped by the over-estimation of the Corsican's abilities. In this I never was deceived: his whole conduct, from the Egyptian campaign in 1801, to the present moment of his complete discomfiture and deposition, has tended to confirm my early conceived opinion of his lamentable deficiency in that real talent, which nothing but the perfect union of commanding genius and consummate judgment can combine to form. But meanly as I thought of his intellectual powers as a first-rate actor on the stage of life, I candidly confess that I did not expect an exit of his mock-heroics so exquisitely contemptible, *si parfaitement en polisson*, as the concluding scene of this Duke and no Duke, this hero of High Life Below Stairs, has

¹ Letter I. p. 378. of the present Number.

exhibited.—I did think that, like SHAKESPEARE'S Tyrant, he would have exclaimed—

“At least we'll die with harness on our backs.”

Instead of which, he sneaks from off the boards, and quits the crimson drapery and wax-illuminated chandelier of the royal tent, for the half-furnished garret and farthing rush-light of a strolling player, when he has ceased “to strut and fret his hour upon the stage:”—why, 'tis the very dreg of scenic pathos, and theatric royalty. No longer like the thunder-bearing bird of Jove, *chi sopra gli altri com' aquila vola*,¹ he sinks at once into the pilfering daw; and submits, without a struggle, to be stripped of all his borrowed plumage.

“And yet this wretched *imbecile* has had his admirers even on this side the channel, amongst the party *Chroniclers*, the would-be *Statesmen*, and self-created *Examiners* of the British Press, whose stupid praises seem to justify the observation of BOILEAU, that there was never yet a character so silly, as not to find a sillier to admire it.

‘*Un sot trouve toujours un plus sot qui l'admire.*’

“But to me, my Lord, whose opinion of the man, and of his slender abilities, has never altered,² it is amusing to see how the tide of

¹ Dante. Inferno.

² If I were ever so much disposed to deny my former decision on this head, my opinions are recorded in print for upwards of twelve years past; and the “*Litera scripta manet*” would rise up in evidence against me. But all who know me know also my opinion, and will also recollect how most of them either ridiculed or seriously combated my early and constant predictions of his downfall, from the want of ability to retain his power; though I am ready to own that I trembled several times for the opportunities offered to him, if he had possessed common judgment, to confirm and consolidate, by concentrating and contracting, his authority. But, perhaps, the annals of the world cannot furnish any other instance so prominent of the

“*Quos Deus vult perdere prius dementat.*”

public judgment ebbs and flows, with the course of an adventurer's success. With the multitude, to be prosperous is to be wise: and the unfortunate are always reckoned weak, in proportion to their failure in the lottery of the blind goddess. The world is too apt to be caught at once by the tinsel splendor of the bold and forward, instead of waiting to appreciate the sterling value of the ore that stands the slow but undeceiving test of fire; nor can I concur in the practical correctness of MR. NECKAR's discrimination, who appears to me to give undue credit to public discernment when he says, '*Les Nations ressemblerent aux vieillards qu' une longue expérience des erreurs et des injustices des hommes a rendu soupçonneux et défiants; et qui accordent lentement leur estime et leur approbation.*' My own experience of the world's general precipitancy of decision leads me to a conclusion directly opposite to that of the Swiss philosopher.

"Having weathered the storm, and brought your bark to her moorings in quiet anchorage, you will not yet however, I trust, my Lord, be in too great a hurry to disarm entirely the gallant vessel you have fought and piloted so well. Had the Usurper met the fate which justice called for; had we got totally quit of the whole adulterous (if fame says true, *incestuous*) family, the '*Œdipodæ confusa domus*;' had all his gang of plunderers and assassins been either executed or transported from the soil; for I cannot repose much confidence on all these reformed bandits—these sudden counter-revolutionary adhesions to a cause which they think just only because it is at present prosperous; they come too much under BURKE's description of '*deserters from principle, listed with fortune, they cannot see any good in suffering virtue, nor any crime in prosperous usurpation*;' had all the *soi-disants*, or most of them (for I can allow some few exceptions,) been done away with, then indeed, might the virtuous Monarch whom we have so mainly contributed to restore, the benevolent LOUIS, have been safely entrusted to the love and guardianship of his loyal and affectionate subjects. But as it is, I confess, my Lord, that I have very extensive doubts, so much so as to reach all the way from Naples to Stockholm; to the former of which places I do not like the neigh-

bourhood of Elba. In short, my Lord, I agree completely with the Editor of this Paper,¹ that after the escape of BUONAPARTE from justice, I do not see how any one of the allied sovereigns can conscientiously sign a warrant for the execution of any criminal, however atrocious.

“ You will not, therefore, my Lord, suffer the repose of Europe to hazard any future disturbance; nor, for the sake of a few additional millions, which the wealth of Britain will never miss, permit the allied forces to quit the territory of France before the state of the public mind is so fully ascertained as to render the security of the royal house of BOURBON no longer a matter of the slightest question. What confidence, for instance, can be reposed in such a man as CAULINCOURT, who, even if his tale be true, of which I doubt, notwithstanding he has contrived to satisfy the virtuous ALEXANDER, too good himself to suspect others of evil; yet, if it be a fact, to what does its evidence amount? that he has only convicted himself in the alternative of rank cowardice, in bearing the stigma of atrocious villainy, and branding his eternal fame, for the sake of adding a few short years to the petty span of human existence: Would either his princely victim, the noble d’ENGHEIN, or our gallant countryman, the murdered WRIGHT, have borne it? I will answer boldly for both their injured spirits, libelled even in the bare supposition—No, not for a single instant!

“ Let no such man be trusted.”

“ But let us place our greatest hope in the strength and correctness of MACHIAVEL’S estimate of popular feeling:—*Illud t men haud obscurum est, populos jam semel ad defectionem prolapsos, ubi iterum sub Imperio fuerint reducti majori cum difficultate amitti.*” And,

¹ See the admirable article on this subject, by the Editor of THE SUN, in that Paper of the 11th April.

² The context of this passage, in Machiavel’s Princeps, is so curiously illustrative of the disappointed hopes of the community in general, when led into revolutionary troubles by the arts of a few interested individuals,

though I do not like the number of BUONAPARTE'S former adherents that seem to be admitted, without a question as to their former conduct, to the same rights and privileges as those who have suffered so much for the sake of loyalty and justice; nor am I quite satisfied as to the line of connexion which seems to be establishing itself, all the way from Elba through Italy towards Vienna,¹ I am yet willing to trust to the good sense and patriotism of the majority of the French nation, aided by the woeful experience of what they have already suffered, to prevent the recurrence of any very serious evil; and one should hope that the very knowledge of the Corsican's unfeeling and selfish character must absolutely prevent any thing like personal attachment to a man who, in himself, is so completely incapable of friendship or affection—

as well as of the reasons why the chief Leader of the Revolution himself is not able to secure the permanent attachment, or prevent the defection of those who were next immediately employed under him in the transaction, that I cannot avoid saving your Lordship the trouble of referring to your library, by transcribing the whole paragraph from his third Chapter:—

“*Spe enim meliora consequendi illecti homines, libenter statum rerum præsentium sui principis mutatum volunt: eâque opinione adducti arma in eum qui rerum potitur, capere student. Quâ in re falluntur maxime. Nam re ipsâ demum sentiunt in pejora se esse delapsos concilia. Et hoc ipsum item ut fiat, ex aliâ re quæ a naturâ est et pervulgata, accidit, quæ novo principi, eos ad quorum procuracionem est evectus, tum copiis alendis, tum variis incommodis, et quas nova adoptio secum trahit infinitis injuriis, semper lædendi causam affert: sic, ut et eos quos in occupando imperio prius, læseras, infensos habeas, et qui te in illud invexerunt, in amicitia retinere non possis.*”

¹ I refer only to the number of Buonaparte's connexions which seem to be settling in Italy, and towards Austria, and the possible influence which may hereafter arise in that quarter, without the smallest inference to any collusion implicating the present views of the Court of Vienna.

*'Talem progenies hominum si prisca tulisset,
Pyrithoum fugeret Theseus, offensum Orestem
Desereret Pylades, odisset Castora Pollux.'*¹

"Since it has been thought proper, however, with what prudence I doubt, to spare his forfeit existence, may he quietly sink into the solitary insignificance, to which he seems doomed—a punishment, were it not for the sake of example, almost as severe as could be inflicted on such an overbearing, imperious, and perturbed spirit as his, experiencing, like the damned, in DANTE'S Inferno,—

*'Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Ne la miseria.'*

"But, consigning him to the oblivion he deserves, let us consider what yet remains to be done in other quarters of the globe, and especially beyond the Atlantic, where the admirable and successful exertions of the little army under the gallant PREVOST seem to entitle them to that speedy and effectual reinforcement, which you will now be so well able to spare for their assistance. Greater effects have, perhaps, seldom, if ever, been produced by so small a force; but it will now be proper to give the scale a decisive turn at once, and, adding strength to zeal and science, effectually punish the folly of American aggression, and give our excellent Commander in that part of the world an opportunity of acquiring his share of the honorable rewards, so liberally and properly bestowed on those, who have distinguished themselves in command in Europe.

"And here, my Lord, before I conclude, allow me to suggest, what has often struck me, that, considering the numerous naval and military claimants in proportion to the few red ribbands to be given away, and to prevent the necessity of bestowing any of them on the meritorious servants of the public in other departments of the State, so as to keep the Order of the Bath entirely as a military honor, there seems to be a call for the institution of a new Order for such persons as have served the State conspicuously in civil employments,

¹ Claudian.

but whose official or personal rank does not entitle them to the higher distinctions of the Garter, but to rank immediately after the Knights of the Bath. Nor can any era offer a more appropriate opportunity for such institution than the conclusion of a general Peace; and to a general Peace, thank Heaven! we can now with safety look forward, nor fear to exclaim,

' At nobis, Pax alma veni, spicamque teneto !'

FALKLAND.

May 10, 1814.

NOTE.—It was not till after the above letters were nearly all gone to Press, that the Editor was obliged with the permission to avow the author. The satisfaction the Public will experience, in their perusal, cannot but be heightened by the information that they are from the pen of FRANCIS PERCEVAL ELIOT, ESQ. one of the Commissioners for Auditing Public Accounts.—EDITOR.

but a close officer or personal rank does not entitle them to the higher distinction of the Knight, but to rank immediately after the Knight of the Bath. This privilege was a mark of special opportunity for such distinctions than the conferring of a general Peerage; and to a general Peerage, there is no rank. However, we can now with safety look forward to our last year.

IRELAND

1811

It was not till after the above notice was nearly all given, that the Editor was obliged with the permission to cross the notice. The notice of the Public will give some idea of the notice, but is not sufficient to the information that they are from the pen of FRANCIS LEBLANC. Editor, and one of the Commissioners for settling the

FRANCIS LEBLANC

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Eliot, Francis Perceval
A series of letters on the
political and financial state
of the nation, at the com-
mencement of the year 1814

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